

Spanish Romances

OF THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY



Sixteenth Century

. 1

THOMAS BINKLEY & MARGIT FRENK

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P R E F A C E

This project began in 1963 when I was an active performer living in Munich. I had arranged for a series of about a dozen practical editions of medieval and renaissance music to be published with an American publisher, but the publisher and I never agreed whether to direct the editions towards players of modern rather than historical instruments. Eventually, because I was touring incessantly and had little time to think about the editions, I asked to be freed from my contract. The manuscripts have been lying around in a drawer ever since, and it is with an understandable sense of relief that I am able, at last, to fulfill part of the promise made so many years ago by publishing at least this one edition.

This volume contains the Spanish *romances* that have been preserved as solo songs. They have been preserved nearly exclusively in the seven surviving prints of the Spanish *vihuelistas* of the sixteenth century, namely those of Luys Milan, Luys de Narváez, Alonso Mudarra, Enrique Valdarábano, Diego Pisador, Miguel Fuenllana, and Esteban Daça. In addition to the music that has been transcribed here, texts, which are considerably more extensive than those found in the *vihuela* publications themselves, as well as translations have been provided. This collection represents a small corpus of an important genre of renaissance song that had strong ties to both medieval and renaissance performance practices. While this collection is more or less complete, in the sense that all the *romances* we have found in solo format are published here, I do want to suggest that a singer might expand the repertory by making her/his own solo *romance*, by taking one of the polyphonic *romances* as the basis for the accompaniment. This is, after all, just what some of the *vihuelistas* did, and modern singers should be encouraged to do that too. Since complete narratives are seldom presented along with the music, a segment of some longer story is often extracted for a given presentation. The songs presented here are models for this process. Absent here (with the exception of "Durandarte, Durandarte") are the

glosses that were sometimes added by the singer himself to the authoritative text, thus making the event still more a part of the performer's own artistic personality and bringing that performance into a very specific social occasion .

The *romances* were sung to the accompaniment of the *vihuela de mano*, the fretted, guitar-like plucked instrument which was the Spanish counterpart of the European lute. The Spanish cognomen "vihuela" is of course a derivative of that distinguished line of organological sobriquets which included the viol and the violin, the viola and the violon(cello). Just as in sixteenth-century Italy, all string instruments in Spain fell under that protective designation as well. Thus we have "viola da gamba" and "viola da braccio", "vihuela de arco" (bowed) and "vihuela de mano" (finger-plucked), not to mention "de pierna" (da gamba), to name a few.

In sixteenth-century Spain the *vihuela de mano* seems to have been a shade more elegant than the *guitarra*, which was generally expected to be smaller than the *vihuela*, normally with four courses of strings as opposed to the six courses of the *vihuela común*. There were several sizes of *vihuelas*, tuned to various pitches as well as a seven course *vihuela*. The term "vihuela" fell out of use at the close of the sixteenth century, and thereafter the term guitar came into common usage. An exception is found in the colonies where, for example, a surviving Mexican manuscript contains arrangements of Corelli sonatas for "vihuela", by which is almost certainly meant the guitar. The word guitar had its own noble derivation: the Greek word "kithara" appeared all over Europe in such forms as "chitarra" ("Saracenica", "Morisca", or "Latina"), "gittern", "cittern", and even "zither".

In 1963 no one really knew how big a *vihuela* was because virtually no instruments had survived. A single *vihuela* was known, an atypical instrument from the monastery of Guadalupe, Estremadura, and now in Paris in the Musée Jacquemart André, Institut de France, Paris.¹ I collected all the representations of *vihuelas* I could find from sixteenth-century sources and made projections of them on a wall. I tried to find out what the differences were between the important aspects of the instruments, one from another; the question of the size of a *vihuela* was really important. It was no help that Bermudo says there are many sorts of *vihuelas*, I wanted a practical answer. For my first test I marked off a 60 centimeter conjectural string length on

1. Described by Michael Prynne, in "A surviving vihuela da mano," *Galpin Society Journal* 22, 1963, and pictured in *The New Groves*, vol. 19, p. 758.

the wall, and then I projected the drawings of the instruments until the instrument had that string length, at which point I drew a sketch of the instrument so that I might measure the body dimensions. For the second test I drew a random but reasonable measurement for the length of the body of the *vihuela* on the wall (I think it was about 35 cm.) and again projected the instruments, noting the resultant string length. I have long since lost the results of these instructive tests, but I recall my wonder at how likely it was that the instruments had very small bodies, even with a 60 cm. string length, which I thought was a reasonably, possibly even maximally, long vibrating length for a tuning in G and rather too long for one in A at modern pitch. Instrument makers scoffed at the proportions of the instruments, since they were accustomed to guitar proportions.

Such a small body would indicate quick response and short sound duration or resonance. Therefore, singing a *romance* with a *vihuela* would be very different from singing one accompanied by a chest of viols; the feed-back from the *vihuela* to the singer might compel a performance short of lyricism and rather strong in the area of declamatory narrative. But this is purely speculative. I shall leave such decisions to the singers themselves.

In the following discussion we speak of Spanish ballads and of *romances*, moving back and forth between these terms. Among musicians, the term "romance" is preferred because in these settings the songs are not part of any oral tradition, but art songs. But from the standpoint of their texts, many scholars prefer to think of them as ballads, linking them with the other oral ballad traditions. Most of the texts of the *romances viejos* are legitimate Spanish ballads, yet they occupy a special place in song repertory that distinguishes them from many other ballad genres. I think of them as art songs with ballad texts which are usually of high poetic merit and thus not strictly speaking historical folksongs.

While on a concert tour in Mexico in the early 1960's, I met Professor Frenk and she became the catalyst for this edition. She did the creative work on the texts during that time, locating the texts and coming to grips with pronunciation, word-wrap, and underlay. The following discussion of the history of the genre and the language is hers. I have written about the music in what follows and have attempted to tie it all together. David Fallows was my able assistant in Munich during the early days of this project. Part of his job was in helping with the preparation of various concert material; most of the initial proposed editions were derived from that extensive body of material. His contribution is gratefully acknowledged here, although it is too long ago for me to recall just where his precise responsibility lay in

connection with this particular edition. The translations were made in my Munich days during the 1960's and have been revised with intelligence and insight by Vanessa Duncan for the present edition. The entire text has been reviewed by Amanda Simmons, whose many suggestions have made this a better book; she has helped me in so many ways for a long time, through thick and thin that this acknowledgement is wildly insufficient. Any errors that will have slipped through, are my own responsibility.

The presentation of this volume, the type-setting, layout and innumerable other aspects of the production have been handled by Dr. Robert W. Binkley, University of Western Ontario in London, Canada, a hobbyist who has not lost his keen interest and professional skill in typography and printing with the advent of the computer. Theme Music Editor was employed for the music, the text was typed with Nota Bene and the whole edition was produced with Ventura Publisher, version 4.2, in a modified Baskerville Handcut font, on an HP Laserjet III printer with a Pacific Page PostScript cartridge.

Thomas Binkley
Bloomington, Indiana
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INTRODUCTION

HISTORICAL SETTING

Like European balladry in general, Spanish balladry grew out of medieval popular culture. *Romances*, as Spanish ballads are called, were probably first composed by Castilian troubadours and *juglares* in the early fourteenth century and performed in palaces and village squares. They came to be sung by the people from Castile and other regions of the Iberian peninsula, being translated into other Iberian languages, including Portuguese and Catalan. These early *romances* were anonymous and orally transmitted from generation to generation, undergoing continuous change. They were part of the cultural heritage not only of the Christian community, but of the Moslem and Jewish (Sephardic) communities as well.

Most of the extant texts were written down and published during the fifteenth and, especially, the sixteenth centuries. The old Spanish ballads (*romances viejos*) became favored by court and urban musicians and poets, marching in step with the new taste for popular songs which spread all over Europe in the Renaissance. Musicians composed polyphonic songs as well as solo songs to *vihuela* accompaniment based on the *romance* melodies, while learned poets used their texts as the basis for long poetic glosses. New *romances* were written in imitation of the old style. The genre came to influence the learned poetry and drama of the *Siglo d'Oro*.

During this period, Spanish ballads, both old and new, continued to be orally transmitted, but their texts were being written down and printed as well, either in chapbooks, broadsides (*pliegas*), or anthologies, some of which "specialized" in this genre (e.g., *Cancionero de romances*, *Silva de varias romances*, first published around 1550 and Timoneda's *Rosas de romances*). Other texts were preserved in manuscript form. Thanks to collectors and

printers, the words of a great number of both medieval and sixteenth century *romances* have come down to us, in one or several versions. It is important to realize, however, that these early collectors and printers often altered and amplified the texts, influencing their subsequent transmission.

We know of many *romances* because Spanish balladry (*romancero*) is still very much alive to this day throughout Spanish and Portuguese speaking countries and communities, and modern folklorists have been able to collect a great many *romances* (and some newer ones) in Spain, Portugal, the Latin American countries, the southern United States, and also among the "Sephardic" Jews who, when forced to leave Spain in 1492 (and Portugal in the seventeenth century), took refuge in the Balkans, North Africa, Turkey, Rhodes, and other regions, later often migrating to other countries including the United States and Canada.

THE NARRATIVES

Although there is still much discussion about the origins of Spanish balladry, certainly the genre arose in part as a suitable vehicle for old heroic themes, which until the thirteenth century had been the subject of long narrative epic poems that were beginning to die out. The new genre took over the metrical form as well as many of the stories, motifs, and poetic devices of Castilian epic poems. At the same time, however, the *romances* were not only much shorter than the epic poems, but differed from them in structure, style, and various technical aspects as well as covering a much wider range of subject matter.

Medieval Spanish and Portuguese ballads usually did not present a story from beginning to end, but rather dealt with short individual episodes or scenes, which were developed in a dynamic, vigorous style, full of dialogues, tensions, and contrasts. A number of ballads have no narrative at all, consisting only of dialogue without even specifying who is speaking (e.g., *Rosafresca*, *Rosafresca*). These *romances* may be fragments, but this fragmentary style actually becomes one of the beauties of the genre, at least as it was practiced in the sixteenth century. Other *romances* (e.g. "Conde Claros con amores", "Retrayda está la infanta," and "Ya cabalga Calaynos") are longer and much more narrative and full of detail; they are called *romances juglarescos* because in the popular mind they are connected with the tradition of the *juglares*.¹

1. Menéndez Pidal, *La poesía juglaresca y los orígenes de las literaturas románicas: Problemas de historia literaria y cultural*, Madrid, 1957.

Spanish ballads were often used to inform people about current events, such as the crimes of King Pedro I "the Cruel" (1350-1369) or specific episodes of the fifteenth century frontier wars between Christians and Moors in Andalusia (e.g., "De Antequera sale un moro," "La mañana de Sant Juan," "Passeábase el rey moro"). Many others dealt with legendary rather than historical matters, relating, for instance, very old chivalric Arthurian and Carolingian stories (e.g., "Los braços traygo cansados," "Ya cabalga Calaynos," "Sospirastes, Baldovinos"). Still others drew upon many of the romantic stories from contemporary European folklore (e.g., "Quién hubiese tal ventura," "Rosafresca, Rosafresca," "Caballero, si a Francia ides").

Among the *romances* composed in the sixteenth century, some developed upon historical subjects, taken from the chronicles. Others dealt with stories that had not previously interested ballad authors, such as biblical themes (e.g. "Adormido se á el buen viejo," "¡Ay de mí! dize el buen padre," "En la ciudad de Betulia," "Israel, mira tus montes," and "Triste estava el rey David") or episodes from classical Antiquity (e.g., "Enfermo estaba Antioco," "Triste estaba y muy penosa," "Mira Nero de Tarpeya". Around 1580 a new kind of balladry, created by such famous poets as Lope de Vega and Góngora, became enormously popular for some time, especially in urban environments.²

THE STRUCTURE OF THE POETRY

Medieval as well as later *romances* both had a very specific versification derived, as we said before, from that of Spanish epic poems. The epics were composed in non-syllabic long lines, divided into irregular hemistichs (half-lines) and organized in longer or shorter *laissez* with the same assonance (correspondence of final words in only the accented and following vowels). The *romance* maintained the assonance, but adopted a more syllabic structure. The eight-syllable hemistich became predominant, alternating with some hemistichs of seven, nine, or ten syllables.³ In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, under the influence of learned lyric poetry, this tendency went even further so that the *romance* was mostly conceived of as a

2. We have not included any of these *romances nuevos*, which both musically and poetically differ in spirit and style from their older counterparts.

3. In Spanish poetry a stressed last syllable of a line is counted as two: "La mañana de Sant Joan", having only seven actual syllables, is considered an eight-syllable hemistich or line.

poem consisting of short eight-syllable lines with assonance—sometimes replaced by rhyme—in the even lines and blank uneven lines.⁴

In spite of the large predominance of eight-syllable hemistichs in sixteenth century prints, some irregularities (mostly lines of more than eight syllables) remained, as can be observed in some of the *romances* in this edition. A few have hexa- and heptasyllabic hemistichs. This type was probably more frequent in the Middle Ages when the genre still seems to have allowed for various features that later almost disappeared. The same may be true of *romances* that have a refrain (e.g., the refrain, “¡Ay de mi Alhama!”, from “Passeábase el rey moro”), those using parallelism (e.g., the hexasyllabic “Pensóse el villano”), and those that have line repetition (*leixa-pren* or *encadenamiento*) as found in Mudarra’s *romances*.

Typically, a *romance* consists of a sequence of lines, usually having one and the same assonance, often combined with rhyme. Unlike most European ballads, the *romance* texts have no strophic division (although the music is organized strophically), though traces can be seen in the varying assonance used in some *romances*. In spite of their basically non-strophic text structure, old Spanish ballads do show a certain, though minimal, tendency to form couplets of long lines. Since the *romance* music composed by the Renaissance court musicians usually covered thirty-two syllables, some of the texts tend to approach a pattern of short-line quatrains (i.e., long-line couplets); however this pattern did not prevail before Lope de Vega and his school made it one of the specific features of their “new ballads.” The texts of most *romances* in this edition, however, are not easily divided into coherent couplets.

THE GLOSSES

Ultimately, the performer’s ingenuity and creativity will allow a deviation from the score, just as the Renaissance counterpart would have done: Luis Milan sings a *glosa*, a supplemental expansion of the text, on his own *romance* “Durandarte, Durandarte,” pretending before the ladies in Valencia to be Orpheus.⁵ This scene is described in Milan’s *El Cortesano*,⁶ in which we also

-
4. Like many modern specialists, we have retained the long line, i.e. two hemistichs, in this anthology since usually it constitutes the smallest syntactical and melodic unit.
 5. Emil Haraszti, “La technique des improvisateurs et de langue vulgaire et de latin au quattrocento,” *Revue Belge de Musicologie*, ix (1955), 12.
 6. Luys de Milan, *Libro entitulado El Cortesano*, in *Colección de Libros Españoles raros ó curiosos*, vol. 7, (Madrid, R1874).

find many other descriptions of conversations and entertainments revolving around Milan and his music. Conforming with court behavior, conversations included what passed for wit, often at the expense of another courtier in competition for the attention of a lady. Model conversations are given in the book, providing both elegant and far from elegant examples of humorous conversational gambits including the use of dialect and the local language (which was Occitan). Often mottos are taken and turned to advantage in rhyme, and sometimes extended glosses (*glosas*) on a particular subject or known pieces were proclaimed. A gloss was the equivalent of a trope, in which a subject was discussed in verse, usually to highlight a particular meaning in a given event.

One example of such a gloss is in the treatment of the story of Durandarte and Belerma which comes up several times. In one case, Milan is engaged in a spirited conversation with Doña Leonor Gualvez, Doña María, Don Fernando, and Don Diego Ladron. Jealousy is in the air, as Don Diego takes Milan's hand and makes up the following couplet:

"Señoras, hé aquí á Orfeo .
Que yo le querria mas feo."

(Ladies, may I present Orfeo
who I would prefer (to be) much uglier)

Whereupon Doña Leonor addressed the following to Don Diego:

"Nunca os vi tener temor
A ningun competidor
Y agora veo
Que Narciso teme á Orfeo".

(Never have we seen you tremble
at any competitor
and now I see
that Narcissus is afraid of Orfeo.)

Luys de Milan said he wanted to respond to the kind words of Doña Leonor with a gloss on the motto (*mote*) "Guárdame Dios de mí," two four-liners concerning he and Narcissus being enamored of the same woman, followed by an extended discussion of whether it was a good thing for a courtier to see the face of Narcissus mirrored in the face of a pretty woman. After a time, Doña Maria says that it would be better to listen to Milan play than to watch his vihuela eating words, a reference to the fact that the conversation had taken the attention away from the music. Milan

indicated he did not feel insulted by the lack of attention to his music, likening good conversation to the sweet harmony of the instrument which dispels evil from the spirit as did David's harp for King Saul, and so, said Milan, he would sing a gloss on the romance of Belerma and Durandarte.

And so Milan produced sixteen half-strophes for Belerma and another sixteen for Durandarte. Belerma lamented the loss of Durandarte, Durandarte lamented the severe sentence Belerma has imposed upon him by loving Gaiferos. After the performance Milan then went on to illustrate his point with another romance, "Mala la vistas, franceses, la caza de Roncesvalles". This continues endlessly in vituperative and sometimes clever conversation, with occasional references to the singing of romances, including at one point singing together "Sospirastes, Baldovinos."

One thing we learn from this is that the historical narratives that survived in the romance repertory were a living part of daily court life and that the good musical courtiers cultivated a spontaneity in song and performance that was quite at odds with our modern performance tradition.

THE TEXTS IN MUSICAL SOURCES

The original musical sources of the *romances* usually reproduced only a fragment of the text, often quite corrupt. In the music of the present edition, we have in most cases underlaid the text found in the original music, sometimes adding a verse from a literary source as well, while offering a better literary text separately. As the purely literary versions of the texts had no direct contact with the particular musical versions that have survived, it

| <i>Text from the Music</i> | <i>Literary Text</i> |
|---|--|
| La mañana de Sant Joan al tempo que al borea un gran fiesta hazen los Moros, por la vega de Granada. ricas aljuvas vestidas de seda y oro labradas | La mañana de Sant Joan, al punto que alboreava, gran fiesta hazen los moros por la vega de Granada, rebolviendo sus cavallos, jugando y van a las cantas, ricos pendones en ellas, labrados por sus amadas, |

Example 1:

"La mañana de Sant Joan"